

One Month Since October 7: Why Did Hamas Carry Out the Attack?

By [Rita Katz](https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/index.php?option=com_customproperties&view=search&task=tag&tagName=Author:Rita-Katz) ([https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/index.php?](https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/index.php?option=com_customproperties&view=search&task=tag&tagName=Author:Rita-Katz)

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Understanding Hamas' ideological origins and strategies can help the world stomp it out.



One month since Hamas' October 7 attack, Israeli officials and others likened the group to ISIS. It's a fair comparison, given Hamas' barbaric torture, amputation, rape, murder, burning, and mutilation of innocents of multiple nationalities—much of these atrocities its fighters proudly livestreamed. But the more accurate comparison should be, in fact, between Hamas and al-Qaeda.

Despite its terrorist designation by the US and several other Western countries and international organizations, Hamas has tried for years to portray itself as a legitimate Palestinian governing body, complete with a separate “political arm” and “military arm.” Why, then, did Hamas launch a massive, unprecedented attack against Israel, knowing well that it can't actually win, and that its attack would lead to scores of dead Palestinians from Israel's retaliation?

Hamas' attack makes sense when we view the group not just as a local terrorist organization, but also as a component of the same global jihadist movement led by al-Qaeda. These two terrorist organizations were founded by the same religious cleric and share the same ideology, goals, strategy, and tactics. And straight out of al-

Qaeda's playbook, the scope and viciousness of Hamas' October 7 attack were carefully calculated to provoke a devastating retaliation, leading in turn to rage in Muslim communities in the Middle East and around the globe.

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On October 10, three days after the attack, Hamas released [a speech](https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-Threat-Statements/boosting-hamas-call-for-solidarity-march-former-chief-urges-donations-and-violent-jihad.html) (<https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-Threat-Statements/boosting-hamas-call-for-solidarity-march-former-chief-urges-donations-and-violent-jihad.html>) by Khaled Mashal, its former chief under whose leadership Hamas won the Palestinian

legislative election in Gaza in 2006. Much attention was understandably devoted to his call for worldwide jihad and international activism on Friday, October 13. But especially revealing was Mashal's homage to a founding Hamas ideologue—not Ahmed Yassin, who was considered by many as Hamas's founder and long-standing spiritual leader until his death in an Israeli strike in 2004, but another.

"Shaykh Abdullah Azzam, this martyred leader, he is a Palestinian," Meshal stated, following up, "...[Azzam] moved to Afghanistan many years ago, as you know, and turned [the Palestinian issue] into the issue of the Ummah [the Islamic Community]...and yes, he prepared himself for martyrdom, and Abdullah Azzam was indeed martyred."

Abdullah Azzam is not a light name to reference. Much of the carnage that the Free World experienced in recent decades, including the 9/11 attacks and mass migrations of fighters to join groups like ISIS in Iraq and Syria, stem from Azzam's strategies and ideological frameworks for holy warfare.

Often called "the father of global jihad," Azzam was born in 1941 in the West Bank. After many years of activity with the Muslim Brotherhood, an international Islamist organization founded in Egypt, he eventually moved to Saudi Arabia, where he met Usama Bin Laden and became his mentor. Upon the start of the Soviet-Afghan war, Bin Laden and Azzam partnered to organize mobilization of foreign fighters to the region and lay the groundwork for the so-called Office of Services, which would subsequently lead to al-Qaeda. In his book, "Memories of Palestine," Azzam [explained](https://ketabonline.com/ar/books/22142/read?part=1&page=3&index=2025175,%20page%203) (<https://ketabonline.com/ar/books/22142/read?part=1&page=3&index=2025175,%20page%203>):

I am a Palestinian, and if I found a way to Palestine and to al-Aqsa, I would prefer to fight there...Those who think that waging jihad in Afghanistan is being neglectful of the Islamic cause in Palestine, are deluded and ignorant. They do not realize how leaders are prepared, how movements are built, and how the nucleus is established, around which the large Islamic army can gather that will purify the earth from great corruption.

...

we say openly to the Jews and their henchmen and the Americans and their followers, that we will not rest and we will not be able to reach a decision until we return to jihad in Palestine. If we are prevented from waging jihad in Palestine because of restrictions and border guards...this does not mean that our minds have turned away from thinking about Palestine...

Wherever a Jew is considered a combatant, he must be assassinated.

To Azzam, jihadi wars in places such as Afghanistan served as springboards to liberate Palestine, a priority he engraved into the very foundation of the global jihadist movement, alongside militant enmity against "infidels."

After Azzam was mysteriously assassinated in 1989, Bin Laden created al-Qaeda, whose name he had taken from one of Azzam's articles, "[al-Qaeda al-Salbah](https://kronosadvisory.com/Salbah)" (<https://kronosadvisory.com/Salbah>)

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RESPONSES, AND RALLY**

Bin Laden and many other al-Qaeda and jihadi figures, including Hamas leaders, described Azzam's great influence on them and on the global jihadi movement in general. While mentoring Bin Laden, Azzam played a vital strategic and ideological role in Hamas' establishment in 1987 as it emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestinian Branch during the first intifada. In an interview with Al-Jazeera in December of 1998, Bin Laden stated that Azzam maintained close contact with Hamas during this time, and that his books were circulated in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Azzam himself described Hamas as the only group that could liberate Palestine and repeatedly [praises](https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/(FILE)1298359986.pdf) ([https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/\(FILE\)1298359986.pdf](https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/(FILE)1298359986.pdf)) [ed](https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/(FILE)1298359986.pdf) ([https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/\(FILE\)1298359986.pdf](https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/(FILE)1298359986.pdf)) Yassin as “the symbol of the firm position of the Islamic movement.”

Azzam's influence on both groups is especially evident in the striking similarities between their respective charters. Hamas' [doctrine](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2023/10/hamas-covenant-israel-attack-war-genocide/675602/) (<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2023/10/hamas-covenant-israel-attack-war-genocide/675602/>) of all-or-nothing, unrestrained jihad to completely eradicate Israel is sourced from the teachings of Azzam, whose slogan was "Jihad and the rifle alone: no negotiations, no conferences and no dialogues." Article 13 in Hamas' charter similarly states: "There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors."

Article 14 likewise pulls from Azzam's declaration that jihad is obligatory, [stating](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp) (https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp), "Liberation of the Muslim land from "invaders... is an individual duty of every Muslim."

Khaled Mashal was thus correct when he praised Azzam for elevating the Palestinian issue to a global level. Mention of Palestine is a staple of countless high-profile jihadi speeches. As Bin Laden exclaimed in the opening of many of his messages, “I swear by God...neither America nor the people who live in it will dream of security before we live it in Palestine, and not before all the infidel armies leave the land of Muhammad, peace be upon him.”

Al-Qaeda's affiliates in Yemen and the Sahel have similarly exclaimed, "...we will not be deterred from jihad until we liberate Palestine, for it is the mother of our issues."

Even for all their rifts—ranging from al-Qaeda deeming Hamas’ elections as apostasy to Hamas hunting down and imprisoning defiant al-Qaeda figures in Gaza—both groups’ common origins created a bond stronger than any disagreement. When the US killed Bin Laden in 2011, Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas’s current chief, [exclaimed](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/02/hamas-osama-bin-laden) (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/02/hamas-osama-bin-laden). “We condemn the assassination and the killing of an Arab holy warrior.”

Hamas continued signaling its global jihadi origins through the years. The
 “[Association of Religious Scholars of Palestine](https://hadarat.net/post/38995/%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%22-%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%A9%22-) (<https://hadarat.net/post/38995/%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A-%22-%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%A9%22->

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with Hamas, held a conference in Gaza on November 24, 2022, to commemorate the 33rd anniversary of Azzam's death. Several Hamas officials spoke, [including Haniya](https://felesteen.news/post/122689/%D9%87%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%83%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%B9%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%AC%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A8-%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A9) (<https://felesteen.news/post/122689/%D9%87%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%83%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%B9%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%AC%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A8-%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A9>), who described Azzam as a miracle “knight of jihad and resistance to the enemies of Allah.” Haniya reminded the audience that the military arm of Hamas, now known as Azz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, was in fact originally called “Abdullah Azzam Brigades.”

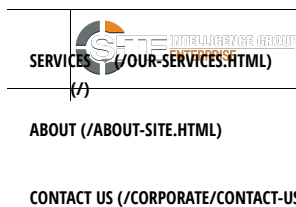
Speakers at the event [called Azzam](https://rapeta.org/Rapta/ar/?page=news&portal=mn&id=1543) (https://rapeta.org/Rapta/ar/?page=news&portal=mn&id=1543) "one of the figures who influenced the Palestinian Islamic movement to start an armed struggle in the stone intifada of 1987" and the writings of the martyr Dr. Abdullah Azzam educational material to shape the [person]

**HAMAS DOES EXACTLY WHAT
AL-QAEDA AND ITS AFFILIATES
SEEK TO DO: INSERT A LOCAL
CONFLICT INTO THE CONTEXT
OF A GLOBAL HOLY WAR.**

Considering the two groups' common origins, it is clear Hamas carried out its October 7 terrorist attack for the same reason that al-Qaeda carried out 9/11 and that ISIS carried out many of its own brutal attacks: to reap massive casualties, provoke drastic responses, and rally supporters from around the world. Bin Laden spoke to exactly this point while discussing the bombings he helped orchestrate against American embassies in Africa in 1998: "Our job is to instigate and, by the grace of God, we did that, and certain people responded to this instigation."

224 people died in the 1998 blasts, including 12 Americans, and more than 4,500 people were wounded. Most of the casualties were Muslims, but Bin Laden saw no issue. He simply called them martyrs and moved forward. Bin Laden would of course “instigate” to his greatest effect on 9/11, proving the power of such an act via all that followed. As the US and its allies carried out scorched earth war against the group, al-Qaeda’s global jihadi network grew to encompass new affiliates across Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Mali, Kashmir and beyond.

All the same, Hamas wanted to “instigate” by attacking Israel the way it did. Innocent Palestinian lives? A passable expense. In a recent [interview](https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2023/10/19/-Israel-is-killing-us-whether-we-resist-or-not-says-former-Hamas-chief) (<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2023/10/19/-Israel-is-killing-us-whether-we-resist-or-not-says-former-Hamas-chief>), Mashal was pressed on the new level of suffering Hamas sparked against citizens of Gaza (while Mashal and the rest of the organization’s leadership live comfortably in high-end hotels far from the conflict zone). He countered flatly, “We know very well the consequences of our operation



on October 7... No nation is liberated without sacrifices."

Herein lies the value of Hamas' attack: without concern for the lives of those it claims to protect, and with no plausible chance of victory against its enemy, the value of Hamas' actions exists solely in the movement-rallying spectacle it creates.

Hamas didn't have to film its savage murders of innocents in Israel just as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi didn't have to film the beheading of Nick Berg in 2004, or that ISIS didn't have to film its burning Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kaseasbeh in 2015. It's a dynamic I detail in my book, [Saints and Soldiers](https://www.amazon.com/Saints-Soldiers-Internet-Age-Terrorism-Irregular-ebook/dp/B09M97X69D/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=) (https://www.amazon.com/Saints-Soldiers-Internet-Age-Terrorism-Irregular-ebook/dp/B09M97X69D/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=): these brutal acts inject an emboldened sense of bloodlust into these group's most hardline supporters, repulsed as the rest of the world may be.

And already, Hamas' ongoing spectacle—strewn across the world [via social media](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/israel-gaza-war-misinformation-ai-social-media-x-tiktok-3vpb8q3k9) (<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/israel-gaza-war-misinformation-ai-social-media-x-tiktok-3vpb8q3k9>)—is earning it the adoration of jihadists and insurgent groups worldwide. [As I recently detailed](https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Articles-and-Analysis/hamas-attack-on-israel-may-have-sparked-a-new-style-of-insurgency-across-the-globe-by-rita-katz.html) (<https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Articles-and-Analysis/hamas-attack-on-israel-may-have-sparked-a-new-style-of-insurgency-across-the-globe-by-rita-katz.html>), the attack had Sunni and Shi'ite extremists alike praising Hamas and pondering how they could follow in its example.

These reactions play into the goals of groups like Hamas and al-Qaeda, which is to provoke potential recruits to join militant jihad, bring forth the travel of fighters to the affected regions, instigate perpetual war, and open flood gates for years of conflict. No surprise then that after the October 7 massacre, the IDF found a cover of an ["al-Qaeda training manual and inspiration booklet"](https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/site-intel-group-3-1-10-adb-ramzi-yusuf-plots-2.html) (<https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/site-intel-group-3-1-10-adb-ramzi-yusuf-plots-2.html>) on the body of one of the terrorists.

Hamas, just like its founder Azzam and its sister organization al-Qaeda, is an integral piece of the global terrorist movement aiming to establish Shariah-ruled Islamic states at the expense of killing many

TO ENGAGE WITH HAMAS, FUND IT, OR HOST ITS EXILED LEADERS SHOULD NOT GO WITHOUT INTERNATIONAL REPRIMAND.

innocent people, "infidels" and Muslims alike. Sure, Hamas doesn't hold official al-Qaeda status the way a group like the Shabaab in Somalia or AQAP in Yemen do, but it doesn't need to. Hamas does exactly what al-Qaeda and its affiliates seek to do: insert a local conflict into the context of a global holy war. This narrative context helps Hamas maintain influence, even when the Palestinians it throws into harm's way overwhelmingly [disapprove](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/polls-show-majority-gazans-were-against-breaking-ceasefire-hamas-and-hezbollah#:~:text=Overall%2C%2057%25%20of%20Gazans%20express,view%20of%20Fatah%20(64%25).) ([https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/polls-show-majority-gazans-were-against-breaking-ceasefire-hamas-and-hezbollah#:~:text=Overall%2C%2057%25%20of%20Gazans%20express,view%20of%20Fatah%20\(64%25\).](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/polls-show-majority-gazans-were-against-breaking-ceasefire-hamas-and-hezbollah#:~:text=Overall%2C%2057%25%20of%20Gazans%20express,view%20of%20Fatah%20(64%25).)) of it.

Hamas's intentions, as evidenced from their actions, charter, spiritual leader, and calls to eliminate Israel and all Jews, were underestimated by Israel and the world. And while hindsight is 20:20, we must now implement the lesson that was learned from the atrocities: viewing Hamas narrowly as a local, political, or strictly Palestinian organization is a dire mistake.

As long as Hamas exists unchecked, it is just a matter of time before the West would see attacks by Hamas sympathizers and copycats. FBI Director Christopher Wray said as much to US Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on October 30, warning: "...On top of the homegrown violent extremists

and domestic violent extremist threat, we also cannot and do not discount the possibility that Hamas, or another foreign terrorist organization, may exploit the current conflict to conduct attacks here on our own soil." In other words, Hamas' threat is not just Israel's threat. It's all of ours.

Hamas must meet the same widespread international opposition applied to Bin Laden's al-Qaeda. That includes comprehensive terrorist designations from every country that does so for al-Qaeda. To engage with Hamas, fund it, or host its exiled leaders should not go without international reprimand. There is no appeasing a group like Hamas into peace, and any country that thinks it can stay out of such a group's crosshairs forever is painfully naïve.

Failure to do so will only mean further atrocities and continued threats to global stability.



Rita Katz

Executive Director & Founder

Rita Katz is the founder and Executive Director of SITE Intelligence Group. She has tracked and analyzed global terrorist networks for decades and is well-recognized as one of the most knowledgeable and reliable experts in the field. She has infiltrated terrorist fronts, testified before Congress in terrorism trials, and briefed officials at the White House and Cabinet.

Ms. Katz has authored two acclaimed books on terrorism, *Saints and Soldiers* (<https://www.amazon.com/Saints-Soldiers-Internet-Age-Terrorism-Irregular/dp/0231203500>) (<https://www.amazon.com/Saints-Soldiers-Internet-Age-Terrorism-Irregular/dp/0231203500>) (Columbia University Press, 2022) and *Terrorist Hunter* (https://www.amazon.com/Terrorist-Hunter-Extraordinary-Undercover-Infiltrate/dp/B00061XNN4/ref=sr_1_10?

[crid=37XLLNDDZLADJ&keywords=terrorist+hunter&qid=1684272458&s=books&prefix=terrorist+hunter+,stripbooks](https://www.amazon.com/Terrorist-Hunter-Extraordinary-Undercover-Infiltrate/dp/B00061XNN4/ref=sr_1_10?crid=37XLLNDDZLADJ&keywords=terrorist+hunter&qid=1684272458&s=books&prefix=terrorist+hunter+,stripbooks)



91&sr=1-10) (Harper Collins, 2003). To learn more about Rita Katz and SITE Intelligence Group, [click here](https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/about-site.html) (https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/about-site.html).

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Author: Rita Katz ([/index.php?option=com_customproperties&view=search&task=tag&tagName=Author:Rita-Katz](/index.php?option=com_customproperties&view=search&task=tag&tagName=Author:Rita-Katz))

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